

manuscript
An Essay

On Asthma

For The Degree

Of Doctor of Medicine;
Submitted

To The Examination

Of

John McDowell, L.L.D. Provost,

The

Trustees and Medical Professors

Of The

University of Pennsylvania,

By

Joseph Bullock junr

Of

Philadelphia. on the 19th day

4 April 1809.



The Committee

of the Senate

of the State of New York

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Of Asthma

When it is considered that the Lungs perform one of the most important functions of the Animal Economy, & (tho a very hardy viscus) are from their great exposure frequently liable to disease, which on account of their insensibility, sometimes makes such rapid progress before a physician is aware of it, as to render a cure impracticable, it will not be denied that they merit the greatest vigilance & attention. Baglivi earnestly exhorts young practitioners to employ their utmost attention in treating pulmonary diseases & warns them not to be deceived by fallacious appearances, nor easily induced to make a favorable prognostick concerning them. Asthma is a disease which often attacks this organ, & if not

Copy of the letter

There is a considerable difference between the
one of the most important functions of the human
body, which is a very large subject, and the
rest of the human body, which is a very small
subject. The human body is a very complex
organism, and it is not possible to understand
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Speedily arrested frequently terminates in death or an incurable disease - as Hydrothorax - Consumption Epilepsy &c. - It appears to be principally seated in the Bronchial vessels.

If the diseases with which this has been complicated & the manner of distinction I shall briefly take notice in this place. It may be distinguished from pneumonia by having little or no fever by its being attended with great languor & dejection. By the pulse being more irregular but without much tension. These marks are sufficient to distinguish it from that disease. It has been confounded with ~~dysspnoea~~ ^{dysspnoea} but from this it may readily be known by its having intervals of ease & apparent health. Asthma has been divided into the Spasmodic & pituitous - or dry & humid. the former attacks in early life the latter in the decline & terminates in a few days either in death - a recovery - or a chronic disease -

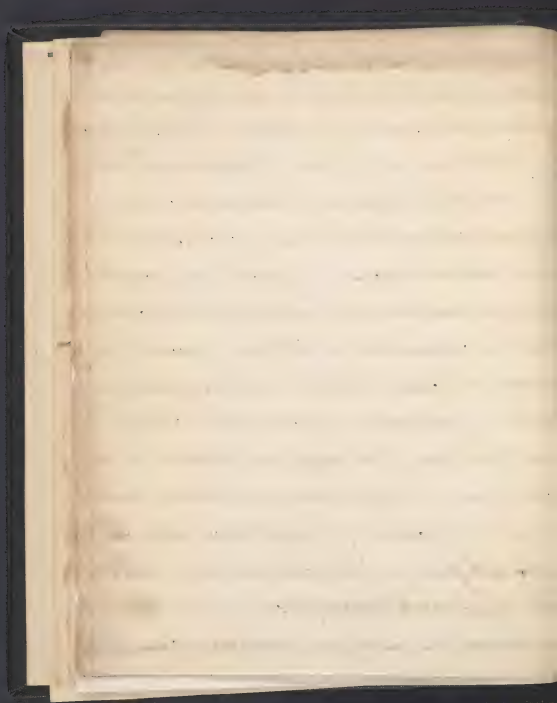
Sir John Floyer remarks that he has met with some
Asthmatics who had labored under this disease in a chro-
-nic form for 50 years & yet enjoyed a tolerable state of
health without much affection of the lungs or inability
to follow their usual employments. A paroxysm of asthma
may be known by a difficulty of breathing - little or no ex-
-pectoration in the first stage of the fit - tho it is often
copious towards its termination. This disease is some-
-times hereditary - attacks at childhood, at puberty, at the
age of 30, & in the decline of life. The causes that dis-
-pose ^{to} this disease are such as dispose to a debility of
the bronchial vessels - they may be divided into direct
& indirect - to the 1st belong - great heat - on this account
it more frequently occurs in Summer. 2^d Cold succeed-
-ing heat. 3^d Certain dry & moist winds & 4th certain
particles received into, & acting mechanically on the
lungs. 5th certain odors - as the smell of new or burn-

ing feathers - Dozen of Ipecacuanha have induced
it according to Dr Rush. 6th Carbonic acid Gas & the
smoke of tobacco receiv'd into the Lungs - To the indi-
-rect causes belong 1st suppression of customary excre-
-tions particularly from the uterus &c - 2^d repell'd
eruptions - 3^d worms in the stomach 4th Gout 5th high
situations near the sea shore 6th Gall Stones 7th long
fasting - 8th pregnancy, this sometimes produces it, cau-
-sing it to be habitual. But others, only to occur during
that period & disappear with it. 9th indigestible ali-
-ment (Professor Rush mentions a case in which
it was induced by eating waffles & buckwheat cakes)
& 10th ascending steep places has induced it - The pre-
-monitory symptoms of this disease are lassitude, great
uneasiness at the Breast, drowsiness after dinner, flat-
-ulency, difficult respiration, short cough, dry & cold
feet &c. when these symptoms appear the disease

may frequently be arrested in its progress - By bediluv-
um - vomits - purges &c. - sitting up all night has in some
instances prevented the fit - The pulse frequently indicates
no disease - this is owing ^{to} the non sympathy of the aortic
system - hence the propriety of dividing the arterial cir-
-culation into pulmonary & aortic - The respiration is
performed with a wheezing noise - & sometimes the spasm
is so great, as to shut the Glottis - Great regard should
be paid with respect to the posture of the patient, as it is
often difficult for him to place himself in any attitude
which affords him the least relief - In determining on
the most proper situation for him, whether recumbent
or erect - the great object is, the expansion of the thorax,
the posture that most favours this - & is at the same time
easiest to the patient - is that which they are often found
in viz. with their legs stretched out on a chair - their
heads inclining forwards - as this situation affords them



most relief it should always be recommended by a Physician a paroxysm of asthma mostly occurs at night the system being at that time being more excitable & predisposed to disease it lasts from $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1-2 or 3 days & occurs from 12 or 3 to 36 times a year. In recent cases the Lungs show no marks of disease but in old chronic cases, they exhibit distinct marks of it viz. such as arise from an accumulation of mucus, from ruptured vessels, or from a gangrene of the parts. The most general appearances that dissections exhibit when death is the consequence of this disease are. 1st no disease whatever. 2^d the vessels of the pleura on the surface of the Lungs & of the trachea are turgid & obstructed. 3^d a livid appearance which resembles the approach of gangrene & 4th a tough white viscid substance occupying the Bronchial vessels a violent fit of the Asthma has all the symptoms of apnoea in death is a remarkable circumstance attending



is, that a cold breath, which is fatal in all other diseases, is not so in this. The signs that mark an unfavorable termination of this disease are the following. If the paroxysms in the beginning are very severe, of long duration, & with but imperfect remissions the cure may be considered difficult. but under these alarming circumstances, particular attention is necessary. If notwithstanding every effort the paroxysms return more frequently & the difficulty of breathing continues there is little hope of succeeding in the cure. the case is still more dangerous if hoarseness comes on - if respiration is performed with a croaking noise; & the spasm of the diaphragm & abdominal muscles increase. But if on attempting to swallow there is a sense of suffocation - if a profuse sweat break out together with fainting, if the extremities become cold, the lips, tongue, mouth & throat parched, together with convulsions it is easy to judge under these circumstances

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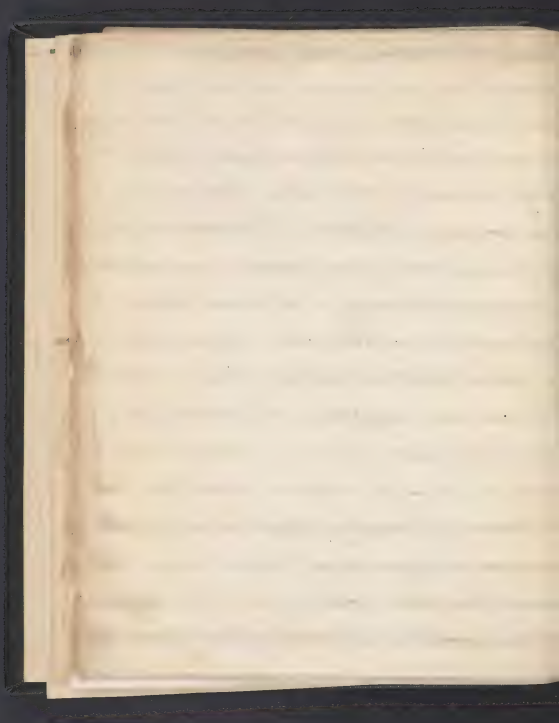
that the patient is given relief. But if on the contrary the
asthmatic paroxysms are of short duration & moderate if the
intervals are long & become more distinct upon the applica-
tion of the usual remedies a favorable termination may
be expected. If coughing or vomiting happen naturally
& a usual discharge of phlegm & mucus from the nose
show if the bowels are natural & a diaphoresis ensue
a happy termination may almost with certainty be fore-
told. If the disease is suffered to advance far, before me-
dical aid is called tho the remedies, even then, have the
effect of stopping its progress. yet the probability of obtain-
ing a perfect cure is less & the patient is frequently sub-
ject to periodical attacks of it.

Of the cure of Asthma.

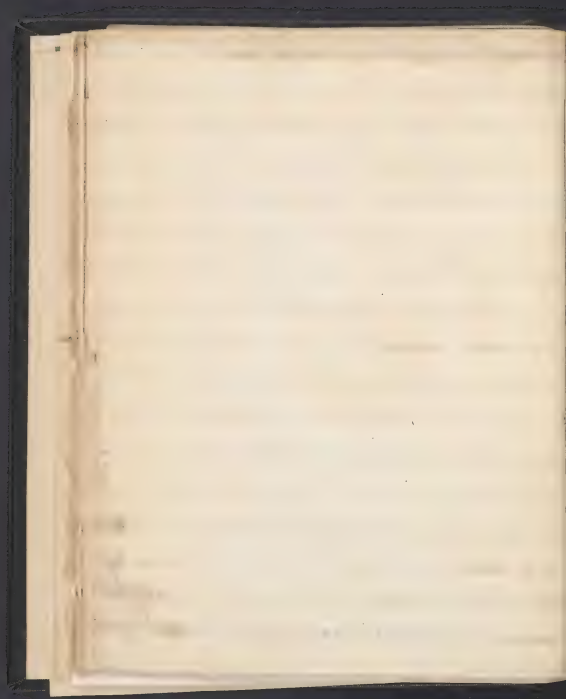
The remedies for the cure of this disease divide them-
selves into two kinds or grades - such as are proper dur-
ing the paroxysm & those which are necessary during



The interval the remedies proper for a Sanguis are 1st V.S.
when there is much oppression dyspnoea &c. Pope when
labouring under it, acknowledg'd the efficacy of this remedy.
Bleeding shows its advantages 1st by shortening the fit 2nd
by rendering it much less violent. & 3^d by preventing those
obstructions in the Lungs, that are often the consequence
when this remedy is not resorted to, producing pul^{mo}ni-
tydorrhoea & ascites. The face is more frequently found
pale or red in this disease but a pale face should
by no means prohibit the use of the lancet. 2nd Vomits are
also of great service by creating a new action; Squills are
often used for this purpose but Tart. Emet. or Ipecacuanha
are equally good. 3rd Purges, it is very necessary to pay
attention to the state of the bowels. Gas Patients in this disease
are often restless of course, purges are necessary of these
Calomel Castor oil. Rheubarb Salts &c. may be given.
In cases of great morbid excitement Cold air & Ipecac.



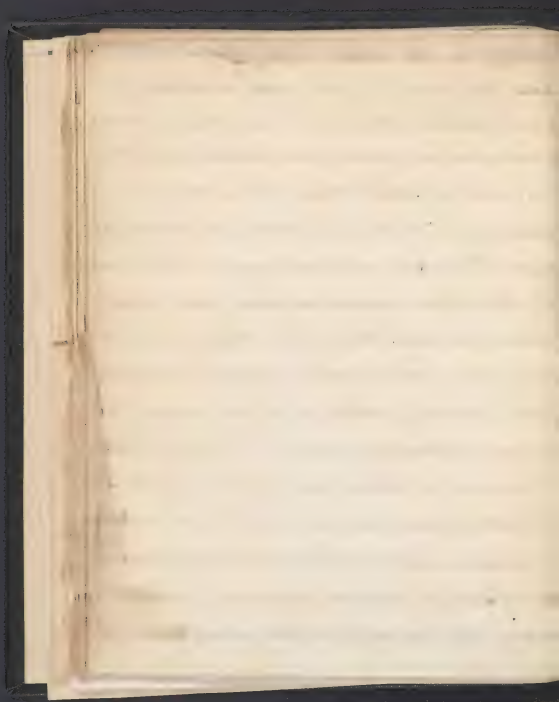
may be used after this is reduced opium, Laudanum in small
& frequent doses, with or without assafoetida musk has
been recommended, Vapor of hot Bath with or without hui
saddish inhaled into the Lungs frequently affords great
relief the smell of cloves has been found useful, Oxygen
gas according to Dr Beddoes. 4th Blisters the efficacy
of blisters in removing pains & spasms, is universally known
are an invaluable remedy in this disease & when applied
to the wrists of an act like a charm they may likewise
be applied to the Breast & Ankles 5th mineral & vegeta
ble acids. very strong coffee in the proportion of 3i of
coffee to 3iv of water - warm air we find that cold &
warm air are useful in the same disease & this shows
the necessity of prescribing different, & almost opposite
remedies in different stages of the same disease to acco
modate the system. a change of air - City air is gene
rally more agreeable to asthmatics than Country, as it is not



so readily affected by the sensitive qualities of the atmosphere: this is proved by the Barometer which shews the change of the weather much sooner in the Country, than in the City. Asthmatics often feel an inclination to the fit before any change in the weather is perceptible; this corresponds with a remark of Sir John Moyer, who observes that before a fall of snow or rain he was often sensible of a great tightness at the chest & Stomach. we may here ask whether asthma can or cannot be cur'd, yes, certainly, it has been cur'd by nature & by accident. In the latter way a patient was cur'd who had labored under it a long time without receiving any benefit from medical aid, or being able to procure sleep in any way, but in a sitting posture. He however being accidentally pursued by some Indians, took shelter in a damp cave, where after remaining some time, he began to feel drowsy, & at length fell asleep, he remained there all night the next night.



finding that no sea water could be got at home - he resorted
to try the cave which being a second time successful
in procuring him sleep he had it converted into a de-
cent habitation & finally recovered this case is mention-
ed by Dr Rush in ^{his} Lectures - In the former way it has
been said 1st by pregnancy 2^d by the cessation of the
menstrues 3^d by a new disease, as jaundice, inviting mor-
bid action to some other part 4th by a change of
climate but in this the kind of asthma under which
the patient labors, should be ascertain'd for if it be of
the pituitous & humid kind, a dry air is most proper
if spasmodic & dry the reverse & in the last case Dr
Thomas Reid recommends holding a sponge fill'd
with water to the mouth The air of the apartments
in which patients with this kind of asthma sit, sh^d
be constantly kept moist by the evaporation of water
from a stove. While Dr Jones remained in Phila-



asthma he was seldom if ever affected with dys-
pnoea, but when in New York was almost con-
stantly troubled with it. The next class of remedies
or those which are proper in the interval are 1st care-
fully avoiding plethora - this is to be guarded against by
occasional V.S. & low diet 2^d avoiding all its exciting
causes, 3^d a seton in the side or issues in the arms;
Sir John Meyer recommends issues from a conside-
ration of the benefit that is often receiv'd from critical
evacuations in asthmatic cases & adds that he had been
informed that King William, during the running of the
sore upon his shoulder - made by a ball at the Battle
of the Boyne in Ireland; was free from his asthma.
4th gentle exercise & hard labor. The 1st may be used when
the patient is unable to labor. the best mode of exercising
is that of riding on Horseback long or short distances ac-
cording to the situation & State of the patient, partial or

- exercises may with propriety be used. Such as rowing, row-
- ing weights, playing at Battledore &c. The cold bath
when used prudently is an excellent remedy it restores
vigor & tone to the system - the efficacy of this remedy is
confirmed by Dr. Baynard who says he had several ac-
- counts of persons who were much relieved, & others per-
- fectly cured by the use of cold immersions in asthma
& other difficulties of breathing - especially if the disease
had not been of long continuance. A recurrence to old &
accustom'd habits is said to have cured it. An instance
of a Lady is mention'd by Dr. Rush, who on leaving off the
practice of taking snuff was seiz'd with asthma which
continued six months & was cured by resuming her old
habit - a diet of Garlic - has been of great service. oil
of amber. Tar in pills or water whichever is most agree-
- able to the patient. The habitual use of the op & ac
of iron in large doses - Sleeping on a mattress as all

diseases partake more or less of an Intermittent type or form,
these remedies are most advantageously us'd just before or
as near the accession of the fit as possible. Bitters of all
kinds - Elixir of vitriol & Bark have been us'd. Lastly a
change of climate residence or occupation. Persons have
been cur'd by going from Naples to Vienna & vice versa -
None of these remedies should be overlook'd in the cure
of this disease - they may all be tried in succession &
if administ'ed by a judicious practitioner ^{it} there is every
reason to hope he will in numerous instances, have the
greatest satisfaction to find, that his exertions for the relief
of the distress'd & afflicted, have been crown'd with
success.

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